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Another "Paris in the Orient": Overlapping Exoticism in Japanese Modernism around 1930[1]

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I. Introduction

How was "Western" modernism received in Japanese literature, and how was it transformed in the 1920s–30s?

This question once referred to the influence of the style or form of Western modernism on Japanese literature, such as stream of consciousness or the camera eye, and it has been a key practice for a long time in the comparative research to approach this topic from the aesthetic perspective. However, postcolonial theory sheds new light on the subject, suggesting a different angle to the reading of modernist canons. Imperialism and modernism are inseparably related, and especially after World War I, Western modernists felt a crisis or instability in the authenticity of their own culture, so they tried to establish a new art and cultural trend through appropriating the exotic "objects" from the non-Western world. If this viewpoint is true of Japanese literature as well, we can arrange the question above like this: How was Western exoticism, exemplified by modernism, received in Japanese literature, and how was it transformed in the historical and cultural context of imperial Japan in the 1920s–30s?

We can say that modernism is, on the one hand, the cultural product of a highly civilized Western metropolis, whilst on the other, it also signifies the practice of exoticism in its representation of a non-Western cultural other. This was how modernism was translated and received in Japan as well. Of course, Japanese modernism was deeply concerned with Americanism and the age of mass consumer culture; however, modernist writers in Japan also shared an

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interest in African masks and "negro" dancers like Josephine Baker who were admired by the surrealists in Paris (Clifford 197–200), to the point that they even appropriated Western exoticism in their own works. The "savage" that they depicted in their works, though, was not one in opposition of "civilization," but a new type of "savage beauty" that coexisted with civilized culture in a "modern" metropolis. Shanghai at the time was known as the "Paris in the Orient" and was renowned as a place where one could experience the modern culture of the West. Accordingly, there are numerous examples of Japanese writers having visited Shanghai and penning their modernist works, a prime example being Yokomitsu Riichi (横光利一)'s *Shanghai* (上海).[2] Meanwhile, for Japan of the 1930s, Harbin was another such place.

When Harbin became another target of such attention, two "Parises in the Orient" became entwined within the "Shōwa Modan" period, generating a heightened sensibility towards exoticism. This paper, focusing on the travel writings and novels of the Japanese modernists such as Abe Tomoji (阿部知二, 1903–1973), Nii Itaru (新居格, 1888–1951), and Gunji Jirōmasa (群司次郎正, 1905–1973), aims to elucidate the overlap of exoticism that can be seen regarding themes of Paris, dancers, and the underlying context of eroticism examined through the images of Shanghai and Harbin, to reveal the process of cultural translation in the early Shōwa period in Japan.

Ⅱ. "Shōwa Modan" and the Representation of Josephine Baker

Of course, the concept of "modern" can be defined in various ways, but, from the translation history in Japan, it first appeared in 1926 by way of the terms "modan gāru" (モダンガール, modern girl) and "modan raifu" (モダンライフ, modern life), and then in 1930, with "modanizumu" (モダニズム, modernism), the concept entered mainstream circulation. While this largely relates to the permeation of Americanism, the reception of Western modernism occurred in tandem with the reception of exoticism in the West. The West's interest in the non-Western world was embraced by Japan, and played an important role in modernist literature. Movies imported from Europe and America, such as hunter/beast movies and adventure films like *Tarzan*, amplified the image of "savage Africa" in the early Shōwa period in Japan. Yet, this image meant not

2. Cf. Lippit 73–116; Peng 99–130; Tierney 19–20; Thornber 274–78.

only the uncivilized, degenerated world to the West, but also a source of new value, the origin of cultural energy, and the essence of "primitive" passion. Japanese authors therefore also chose to focus on the "beauty of Africa," quite in contrast to the savageness. In implicating the aesthetic nature of Africa, the one who played an important role was the dancer Josephine Baker. Even in Japan, she was known by the name, "Black Venus." Amongst the avant-garde movements that were occurring one after the other in reaction to euro-centricity following World War I, Japanese authors and intellectuals sought to imitate this non-Western, primitive strength that was being so well received.

Josephine Baker, whose very being represented primordial beauty in Japanese eyes, began to appear in mass culture at around the same time. She made a significant appearance as the queen of "Revue" in the 1931 published *Gendai Ryōuki Sentan Zukan* (現代猟奇尖端図鑑, Illustrated Guide to the Contemporary Hyper-Bizzare), which could also be considered to be a culmination of "ero-guro-nansensu" (エロ・グロ・ナンセンス, erotic, grotesque, nonsense). However, she also appeared in the "Erotic" section of the same illustrated guide, even being lined up next to naked Japanese and various other nationalities and races of women. Furthermore, the illustrations that appear under the heading "Grotesque" introduce the half-naked lifestyles of "barbaric races," and when allotted with these images, the image of the "savage" becomes more pronounced, and from this perspective, Baker could even be received within a primitive or decadent context.

In light of this situation, critic Ōya Sōichi (大宅壮一) makes the following statement:

> Now erotic-grotesque-nonsense has diverged from the interests of avant-gardists, who were floating between cinema, café, and artistic literature, and has become a philosophy of daily life for the common people who, through severe economic depression and unemployment (or fear of unemployment), have lost their moral compass along with their economic foundation. This is especially true of the middle class, whose defensive powers are weak.
>
> The thing that the public desires after losing hope for the future, and compounded by the stresses of life is, first and foremost, intense sensory stimulus. What rules the realm of the senses depends not on quality but on intensity. On the one hand, you have the revival of savage beauty—if it's in regard to music, it's jazz; if it's a color, it's a primary color—and on

> the other hand, you have erotic content being emphasized in bigger and more revealing ways — rather than theater it's cinema, rather than cinema it's revue, rather than revue it's a hostess, or a prostitute, and so on.

> 今やエロ・グロ・ナンセンスは、シネマとカフエと芸術派文学との間を泳 いでゐる一部尖端人の趣味から離れて、殺人的不景気と、失業ならびに失業 の不安によつて、生活の経済的基礎とともに従来の生活指導精神を失ひつゝ ある一般大衆、殊に抵抗力のもつとも弱い中間層の生活哲学になつて来たのである。
>
> 前途は希望を失ひ、生活に緊張を失つた大衆がまづ第一に要求するものは、強烈な感覚的刺激である。ところで、感覚の世界を支配するものは、高度ではなくて強度である。そこで一方では、野蛮美—音ではジヤズ、色では原 色—の復活となり、他方では、演劇よりもシネマ、シネマよりもレヴユー、レヴユーよりも女給または私娼といつた風に、エロチシズムの含有量のより 大なるものに対する要素がますます増大して行くのである。(205–06)

When "the common people" adopted the "interests of avant-gardists" and these interests were transformed into "a philosophy of daily life for […] the middle class," the varying elements of "ero-guro-nansensu" became unified and began to be enjoyed as "intense sensory stimulus." And this "intensity," which distracts from the "severe economic depression and unemployment," is found in "savage beauty."

The Shinkō Geijutsu-ha (新興芸術派, Rising Art School), which was formed around the same time as the sudden rise in Shōwa *Modanizumu* literature, published twenty-four volumes of its "Shinko Geijutsu-ha Sōsho" (新興芸術派叢書, Rising Art School Library) series under the publisher, Shinchōsha (新潮社). Of these volumes, four authors contributed two volumes on their own. One of those authors was Abe Tomoji who wrote *Koi to Afurika* (恋とアフリカ, Love and Africa, 1930), and then *Umi no Aibu* (海の愛撫, Caress of the Sea, 1930).

Tomoji, a translator of countless works of English authors such as Edward Foster, Jane Austen, Oscar Wilde, Emily Brontë, Charles Kingsley, Conan Doyle, and American authors including Herman Melville and William Faulkner, wrote the following passage that was published in an anthology of critical essays in 1930:

> When you focus on the production process, literature becomes a reproduction of order, namely, the order of using intellect to expand our

> range of emotions and seek out the unknown in the world. However, when commenting on or critiquing in this regard, by being intellectually aware of this realm of emotions, literature becomes the vessel that holds our experiences in orderly abundance.
>
> 製作を中心にしていへば、文学とは、知性を方法としてわれわれの感情の前後左右にひろがる未知の世界を探求し、これに秩序をあたへて再現する、といふやうなことになる。又、このことを、観照、批評の方面からいへば、その感情の世界を知的に認識することによつて、われわれの経験を秩序ある豊富さを持つものとすることになる。(*Shuchiteki Bungakuron* 5−6)

The point I would like to make here concerns the following passage from a novel that was written by the same person and published around the same time as an anthology of critical essays:

> If you don’t believe it, that’s fine, but put simply, love is Africa. All of life’s mysteries have gradually disappeared and love, just like Africa — the only dark continent that remains on the map of the world — is the only thing left over that is still relatively “unknown.” There’s still more to be discovered.
>
> 嘘と思ふならそれでいい、要するに恋がアフリカなのだ。人生は次第にその神秘を失つて来たが、ただ恋愛だけが、世界地図のうへにのこつたただ一つの暗黒大陸アフリカのやうに、未だ幾分の「未知」をのこしてゐるのだ。探検の余地があるのだ。(“Koi to Afurika” 122−23)

What sustains the expression “love is Africa” is the fact that both elements are in their own way “unknowns” in the world and therefore, in principle, contain aspects that are still “to be discovered.” Therefore, according to Abe, the relationship between emotion and intellect simply transitions to a relationship of domination: of male/female, and of civilized/savage. Novels of intellectualists manifest desires towards sexuality and ethnicity, and ultimately give birth to the paradox that is depictions of characters dominated by emotions.

In this novel, you can also find the expression “woman is Negro.” The setting of the story is always a regional city in Japan and all characters are Japanese, so the abruptness of an expression like “love is Africa,” or “woman is Negro” is quite indelible. However, this particular point was not a problem for

Japan of the 1930s, the reason being that, a foundation of explicit exoticism in Japanese modernist literature already existed by this point and was dominating culture in the tri-partite form of erotic, grotesque, nonsense. Therefore, it was nothing particularly out of the ordinary (Silverberg 227–30).

In the novel *Koi to Afurika*, "Africa," "savage," and "beauty" all coexist. And the collection of short stories is a succession of exoticisms, as it were, and the connection between "Africa" and "Japan" becomes a less obscure one. This is the result of hunter/beast movies and information about African-American dancers being tied together in the same period. This attention towards "savage beauty" was not a phenomenon seen in avant-garde movements such as Dadaism or Surrealism alone. It was an element that can be found in the *ero-guro-nansensu* that prevailed throughout Japanese *modanizumu* in its entirety. In the period that Abe published *Koi to Afurika*, the latest literary trend of thought in the West concerned non-Western exoticism, and that information was then brought into the realm of Shōwa *Modan*. You could say that Abe was well attuned to these states of affairs, which he reflected in his novels.

Ⅲ. Overlapping Images of Shanghai and Harbin

Paris was too far to visit for the regular Japanese modernist, so they sought out the cities closer to home. Shanghai was already famous as a modernized metropolis, full of "Western" and erotic, grotesque atmosphere (Driscoll 182–91), but, in the early Shōwa period, much attention was also paid to Harbin in northeast China as another "Paris in the Orient." In February 1930, Shinchōsha organized a roundtable discussion on "Modanizumu Bungaku oyobi Seikatsu Hihan" (モダアニズム文学及び生活批判, Criticism of Modernist Literature and Life), which appeared in the magazine, *Shinchō*.

Such was the extent of topics that the discussion covered. Needless to say, European and American imports, like literary, musical, and filmic works, as well as imports relating to lifestyle, like café culture, bobbed hair, and free love, and all received attention at this discussion. The focus of this paper, however, is the position and relation between Japan and East Asian culture in the Western-inspired modern age. In light of this, attention should be drawn to the following dialogue that transpired towards the end of the discussion:

Okada: Isn't it good the way the women in China walk around wearing

pants.
Yoshiya: In Shanghai they have bobbed hair and wear military caps like officers.
Nakamura: Nii-san, you’ve been to Harbin, haven’t you? In a place like that with no traditions, surely they would have a grasp on *modan* trends?
Nii: At any rate, Shanghai is an absurd place, so it’s probably easy to do anything you want there.

岡田。支那の女のパンツを穿いて歩いて居るのはいゝですね。
吉屋。上海なんかでも士官のやうに断髪して軍帽を被つて居るのがありますが……。
中村。新居さんはハルピン位まで行つたんでせう。あゝいふ伝統を持たない所にはモダンのはしりがあるでせう。
新居。兎に角、上海なんかは無茶苦茶にやられるから、やり易いでせうね。(Nakamura, et al. 146)

Nakamura Murao (中村武羅夫), who prompts Nii Itaru, “Nii-san, you’ve been to Harbin, haven’t you?” was not only the editor of the magazine *Shinchō*, but also involved with writing literature, formulating criticism, and forming literary groups as a central figure in the rise of *modanizumu* literature in Japan. All the participants in the discussion, including Nakamura, seemed to broach on the topic of Harbin and Shanghai as places of “*modan* trends” and “no traditions.” The conversation was sparked by Yoshiya Nobuko (吉屋信子) stating, “The *modan* that I have come to understand, largely concerns women across America and all of Europe becoming more like men,” and the closest example of this tendency that the reference is not of the Japanese women in Ginza or Asakusa, but of the Chinese women in Harbin and Shanghai.

Also of great interest is the subtle divergence in the dialogue between Nakamura Murao and Nii Itaru regarding the modern cities. In the second half of the quote, Nakamura raises Nii’s experience of Harbin, prompting his response to the expression, “*modan*.” Nii responds instead by referring to Shanghai. Nii Itaru was a critic who is scarcely paid heed today. However, he was a strong supporter of the anarchist movement, as well as being credited for coining the terms “mobo” (モボ, modern boy) and “moga” (モガ, modern girl). His body of work also includes the Japanese translations of Pearl S. Buck’s *The Good Earth* and John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, and his rise to the position of Mayor of Suginami Ward in Tokyo following the end of World

War II.

In 1929, he set out for the Chinese mainland, in a sense, in search of the ideal *modan gāru*. Nii Itaru toured China from August to September 1929. Going from Tokyo across the Kanmon Straits, crossing over to Dalian by boat, and after stopping by areas such as Lushuko, Andong and Mukden, arrived in Harbin at the end of August. He also made visits to Beijing and Shanghai. Travelers who joined him along the way changed with each place he visited, and such company included Horiguchi Kumaichi (堀口九萬一), Yamada Kazuo (山田一雄), and Katō Takeo (加藤武雄).

His impressions of the women he met in Shanghai were often clear departures from those of the women he had met elsewhere. The following are two quotes from the article "Chukaminkoku no Onna" (中華民国の女, Women of China), which appeared in *Machi no Hōbutsusen* (街の抛物線, City Parabola).

> Walking the streets of Shanghai, I saw many new women strutting around stocking-less with bobbed hair. They wore their collars high in the fashionable way. They held their posture straight as they walked. The latest Western trends have been appropriately incorporated into Chinese women's fashion. China's modern women are worth keeping an eye on in the future. Moreover, they seem wonderfully practical. That's why I found them so fascinating.
>
> 私は上海の街を歩いて、断髪は愚かスタツキングレスで闊歩する幾多の新女性を見た。彼女等の襟はハイカラの如く高くし。垂直の姿勢で歩いてゐた。支那の婦人服に洋服の新流行を適当に合体させてゐる。支那の近代女性はたしかに将来注目すべき存在だ。それに彼女等は素晴らしく実行的である。それだから面白いのだ。(347–48)
>
> Sometimes I give lectures at the Lida Academy in Jiangwan in the outskirts of Shanghai. I have given lectures at the academy in front of Laodong University students and Lida Academy students. They have a free, utterly free, academic style, and it was because of this very environment that I was able to speak whatever I liked without restriction. But that's insignificant. I will never forget the sagacious young female students I saw as I glanced around the room from my rostrum, and seeing their eyes so full of courage. My strongest impression of the women in China that I

want to relay is their eyes, or to be more specific, their eyes so forged with intent, emotion, and ideology.

わたしは上海郊外の江湾にある立達学園の講壇に立つことがある。その学園で労働大学の学生と立達学園の学生とを前にして講説したことがある。自由、きわめて自由な学風で、そこでこそ私は何等の拘束なくして喋べることが出来た。が、そんなことはどうでもいい。わたしはそのとき演壇から瞥見した若き女学生達のさかしくも亦勇気のありさうな瞳を忘れることが出来ない。わたしが支那の女の感想として最も印象的でありうるのは全く彼女たちの瞳であること、もつとハツキリ云へば、彼女たちの瞳に含まれた意思·感情·思想から晶形されたそれだと云ひたいのである。(350)

Nii Itaru paid attention to the outfits of the Chinese women walking around Shanghai. The appearance of these women walking the streets without stockings and their collars raised was a fresh sight to a *modan gāru* critic, Nii Itaru. He was also impressed by their skillfulness to “appropriately incorporate” the “latest Western trends” in fashion. Furthermore, he found Shanghai’s “female students” to be intellectual and full of confidence, and their “free, utterly free” atmosphere aligned with his ideal *modan gāru* that he searched for. However, Nii simply felt a freshness to their appearance—they did not become the focus of his attention. What Nii felt in Shanghai was the “anarchistic tinge” as evidenced by their “extreme joy in freedom and the independence of their actions” and the women’s receptivity to that type of atmosphere.

The local newspaper *Manshū Nippō* (満洲日報, Manchuria Daily Newspaper) was the first to report on the situation in the area at the time, and it was here that Nii revealed his initial impressions of Harbin:

I walked through Kitajskaya numerous times. I prefer more Occidental places, so I didn’t quite grasp just how much I would enjoy walking around the streets here more than in Ginza in Tokyo. I especially loved the hotels and the modern-ness. I also enjoyed all the vestige of a Russian city that Harbin maintained. But these are just common observations. I also came to like the elegance of Majiagou. What was unfortunate, however, was all the Chinese soldiers coming in from Jilin, frequently being violent, so now there are very few beautiful Russian girls walking around outside and playing in the sun. If only I had visited before it got this way, I would have been able to see all the Russian women moving

around so pleasant and carefree.

> キタイスカヤ街もわたしは幾度となく散歩した。わたしの好みはオクシデンタルなところにあるが故に、その街での遊歩は東京の銀座よりもどれだけすきになれたか分からなかつた。取分けオテル、モデルンのあたりを愛した。わたしはハルピンのもつロシヤ都市の面影がとにも角にもうれしいものだつたのだ。だがこんな観察はあまりにも月並みであるにちがひなからう。馬家溝あたりの風趣もすきになれた。たゞ残念なことには吉林から入り込んだ支那兵が頻々として乱暴をするとかで、ロシアの綺麗な娘たちが外光を浴びて楽しんで散歩するその姿が著るしく減つてゐると云ふことだつた。さうでないときに訪れられたら、どんなにか、快適に且つ彩麗に動くでもあらうロシア女の情景がスナツプアツプ出来たであらうと云ふことだつた。(2)

The first thing to jump out at Nii during his time in Harbin was the Westernness of Kitajskaya. He points out that the "Occidental" atmosphere far surpasses that of "Ginza in Tokyo" and you can see evidence that he thoroughly enjoyed his time in this modern city of the Chinese mainland. On the other hand, you can see his lamentation at the absence of "beautiful Russian girls" gracing the streets because of the "violent" behavior of the "Chinese soldiers." Tens of thousands of white Russians who migrated to Harbin in the 1920s following the revolution found themselves caught between conflicting demands of the Chinese and Soviet governments. It was perhaps because of this political instability that Nii did not get to "see all the Russian women moving around so pleasant and carefree" (2).

In his "Harupin" (ハルピン, "Harbin") that appears in *Kindai Seikatsu* (近代生活, Modern Life, 1929), Kato Takeo describes, "Amongst the dancers there was one that he said resembled Greta Garbo, so Nii-kun must have really taken a liking to her" (46).[3] What is interesting is the fact that the city of Harbin is being discussed symbolically through the relationship between "the city of the day" and "the women of the night." The attention of both is drawn to areas that have an air of the West to them more than the cities in Japan. But at the same time, their interest in the city becomes linked to the women who live there and the flesh of these women. The women who lived in Harbin were more Western than the Western-fashion-wearing *modan gāru* in Japan. And

3. "踊り子の中の一人を、グレタ・ガルボオに似てゐるといふので、新居君は大変気に入つたらしい" (46).

even though it may have fit with the *ero-guro-nansensu* trend at the time, it was still a distant stretch from Nii’s ideal *modan gāru*.

Ⅳ. Politics of the Gaze

Japanese writers who wrote about their experiences in Harbin were greatly attracted by the modern/Westernized women in Harbin, especially the immigrant women from Russia, because of the modernity they represented. Japanese writers admired the bourgeois women of Russia for their highly Westernized lifestyle. Paradoxically, however, they regarded the Russian dancers in cabarets as a symbol of degeneration in Western culture. To take some examples, Kiyozawa Kiyoshi (清沢冽), the author of *Modan Gāru* (モダンガール, Modern Girl, 1926), described the Japanese modern/Westernized women, contrasting them with modernized women in Harbin. Gunji Jirōmasa, who gained his reputation with his “modern girl” novels such as *Miss Nippon* (ミスニッポン, Miss Japan, 1930), visited Harbin and published *Harbin Onna* (ハルビン女, Harbin Woman) in 1932.

The romance plot between an Occidental/masculine colonizer and an Oriental/feminine colonized can often be seen in Western colonial texts. In the travelogues of Japanese writers, however, this plot is transformed into a romance between an Oriental/Japanese man and an Occidental/Russian woman. Their romance assigns him “the yellow man’s burden” to save the woman from the degenerated world. Was such a trope a medium by which Imperial Japan tried to legitimatize the Japanese colonial occupation of Harbin?

Gunji Jirōmasa is almost forgotten today, but was hugely popular and influential in the 1930s. Focusing on two of his novels, his detective novel, “Ana − Odoriko Oruga Arurowa Jiken” (穴—踊子オルガ·アルロワ事件, The Hole − Orga Arlova’s Case, 1931), and *Anna Orlova* (1939), I shall argue that these two novels are testimonies to mixed feelings on the part of Japanese writers towards Russian women in Harbin, and, more generally, towards the relationships between modernization/Westernization and colonialism.

It is worth noting that Harbin attracted many Japanese tourists in the early 20th century, especially through ad campaigns run by The South Manchuria Railway Company. Harbin developed into the “Paris of the Orient” through this company backed by Japanese colonial policies, and it was this company that helped to construct the Japanese puppet-state of Manchukuo in northeast

China.

The South Manchuria Railway Company increased its capital and tried to expand the railroads into the northeast of China in the 1920s. With the expansion of its railroads, the company began to construct the cities along the railroads and aggressively advertise for Manchuria's development to the industrial companies located in Japan. Japanese people who lived in Harbin were also caught up with the trend. *Harbin Annai* (ハルビン案内, Harbin Guide Book, 1925) is filled with photographs that tried to give the Japanese readers the impression that Harbin was a "modern" city like European cities. In addition, this book gives a lot of information about Harbin, such as its climate, timetable from Japan, hotels, souvenirs, and Russian and Chinese phrases needed for travel. The book was published by Harubin Shōhin Chinretsukan (ハルビン商品陳列館, Harbin Goods Display Center), which issued a lot of booklets in order to attract factories and offices from Japan (Minchiello 56).

The more the Japanese people began to exploit Harbin, the less the power of Russian immigrant bourgeois society became, with some forced to live in poverty, abandoning their honor and wealth. Okuno Tamio described the state of these people in his travelogue *Harbin Yowa* (ハルピン夜話, The Night of Harbin, 1923). His interest, however, was shown in places such as cabarets or striptease parlors. He paid particular attention to the Russian women who worked as striptease performers and prostitutes. Kiyozawa Kiyoshi also compared Russian prostitutes in Harbin with Japanese prostitutes in *Modan Gāru*. At that time, Harbin was represented as one of the most exotic and sexualized cities in the Orient.

It was important for Japanese men to meet Russian modern/Westernized women. Their exoticism had a lot to do with Japanese men's inferiority complex as well as their admiration of the Occident. Because of their inferiority complex, Japanese men wanted to conquer and appropriate the Occident, if not in reality, then at least through narrative. This is part of the reason why Japanese men saw the Russian women in ambivalent ways. On the one hand, Russian women were degenerated, like striptease performers and prostitutes; on the other hand, they were still noble aristocrats before the Russian Revolution. When a Japanese man spent a night with a Russian prostitute, he became a Westernized Oriental gentleman, and he felt superior to the Occident through such an interpretation.

These images aroused Japanese modernists' imagination. Gunji Jirōmasa visited Harbin and wrote a detective novel, "Ana − Odoriko Oruga Arurowa

Jiken.” In the novel, Orga Arlova was a dancer who moved from Shanghai. Her father, a Chinese man, was killed by the Jewish manager. Though her fiancé knew who the murderer was, he could not speak and was later arrested as the murderer. A Japanese tourist, the protagonist of the novel, meets Orga in this situation. He happens to know the truth when he finds a hole in a wall of her room and a drawing of the murderer. But he does not tell the truth to the police and leaves Harbin with Orga.

Orga Arlova represents the politics of sexuality and ethnicity in Harbin at that time. She is exposed to the gaze of men in the cabaret as well as in her room. The men who are watching her are Chinese, Jewish, Russian, and Japanese. So, if we think about this story from another point of view, we can say that this story is a geopolitical allegory of that time. At first, a Jewish man killed a Chinese man in order to get the hybrid (Russian and Chinese) body. And a Russian, who is arrested, relinquishes his control over the body, leaving a Japanese to take priority in the end.

This reflected the political situation in Harbin. The expansion of the South Manchurian Railway Company accelerated the cultural hybridity in Harbin. A lot of people, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, Jewish, French, German, and so forth, gathered there. They were bureaucrats, tourists, journalists, businessmen, laborers, beggars, prostitutes, and so on. This kind of cultural hybridity is made up of a combination of images such as “savage,” “grotesque,” and “mysterious.” In the novel “Ana − Odoriko Oruga Arurowa Jiken.” the politics of the gaze represents the colonial desire of the Japanese Empire. When we see the aesthetics of degeneration in this novel and travelogues with the geopolitical context during the 1920s to 1930s, they show us the politics of Empire.

V. Yellow Man’s Burden

Harbin, another “Paris in the Orient,” was where the West and the East met, and was also the place where capitalism and communism, in other words, the Western world and the Eastern world, met. In Gunji Jirōmasa’s first short novel, “Puroretaria” (プロレタリア, The Proletariat, 1930), the proletarians in the story were not the people of Japan but of the Soviet Union and of China. That is, Gunji Jirōmasa was drawing on the proletarian people from Russia who aimed at class solidarity, overcoming racial differences in “Puroretaria” at almost the same time as he was representing Harbin as an Occidentalized,

exotic bourgeois/degenerated culture in "Ana − Odoriko Oruga Arurowa Jiken." Harbin as a city where the proletariat from all nations gathered against bourgeois, and Harbin as a degenerate city of bourgeois decadence.

The same kind of contradiction can be found in Gunji Jirōmasa's travelogue, *Harbin Onna* (1932), in which he describes his escape from Harbin with a woman named Anna Orlova when the war began on September 18, 1931. He went on to write a novel in English based on this experience, called *Anna Orlova: No Gun and No Soul*. Interestingly, in this case, the author's name is O'hara Juni, and Gunji appears as the publishing agent for the book. What is more, we can find only the third limited edition in Japan, which tells the readers that this book was first printed in Shanghai and since second in Tokyo.

A summary of the plot of *Anna Orlova* is as follows. A British businessman named John Harvard comes to Harbin from Shanghai for an enterprise expansion, where he meets a Russian woman, Anna Orlova, who lives and works in the city as a dancer. Although she was engaged to a Russian migrant named Alexander Ivanovich, she marries John Harvard to gain economic standing. The timeline overlaps with the Soviet army's march towards Manchuria, and John Harvard surrounds his estate with a fence to try and protect the woman from Russia under the British national flag. While Alexander Ivanovich works as a laborer making the fence to earn his daily living, he is getting tired of waiting for the arrival of the Soviet army. Before long, the Soviet army invades the estate of John Harvard and also brings about the whereabouts of the love-triangle between the three (John, Anna, and Alexander) following the death of Alexander Ivanovich. John Harvard and Anna Orlova then decide to leave for Spain.

A love triangle between a British man, a Russian woman, and a Russian proletariat man can be taken as an allegory of the complicated relationship between Capitalism, Harbin, and Communism. Anna Orlova holds contradictory positions because she, while being an Eastern woman, is also highly Westernized, that is, modernized, hence, a "degenerate" woman. The contradictory positions Anna Orlova occupies are equivalent to the paradoxical geo-political meanings of Harbin; Harbin, as the "Paris of the Orient" might look like the Occident, yet even so, from a Euro-centric point of view (which most Japanese writers shared), it was still in the "Far-East." In short, Anna Orlova, as well as Harbin, provokes desire and anxiety precisely because they cannot be defined by any clear-cut binary oppositions, like communism vs. capitalism, or the East vs. the West. Rather, they cross the border between the

East and the West, embodying the hybrid nature of modernity.

The element of proletarian literature is inherent also in *Anna Orlova*. Anna Orlova goes back to Alexander Ivanovich in the Soviet Union later in the novel. Her decision is told like this: "If I go to the Soviet, it will be to take Alexander's hand as a friend, and not as a lover" (181). That is, she shows a class consciousness that is stronger than the feeling of love. Possibly, Gunji Jirōmasa needed to advertise the possibility of such class solidarity to the reader, and wrote this novel in English to escape censorship by the Japanese Government.

Alexander Ivanovich died in the battle between the Soviet army and the Chinese army, and the love between Alexander Ivanovich and Anna Orlova, as well as their comrade-friendship, died. John Harvard heard about Ivanovich's death and then concluded the relationship between Alexander Ivanovich, Anna Orlova, and himself as follows:

> But Bill, it's not a good idea to see him as an individual. To my conception he represents modern thought, which trends toward Communism, while I represent Capitalism. Don't you see, Bill? I have no regrets over that loss, in[s]tead I am glad to realize the fact that Capitalism still has some power; and I also possess the power to win her. (244)

Without doubt, John Harvard trusted in the power of capitalism. Then, is the text simply celebrating the victory of capitalism over communism? The writer seems to challenge the power of capitalism. John Harvard's estate was occupied by the Soviet—symbolically, the British supremacy was violated. The inviolability as a British territory did not function, and his enterprise ended with failure. He survived, unlike Alexander Ivanovich who participated in the battle. In this sense, John Harvard won in the eternal triangle involving Anna Orlova, but he lost almost everything. Not wanting to admit his defeat, he says, "I am glad to realize the fact that Capitalism still has some power."

Furthermore, after the conversation, the writer goes on to write, "What pity—yet, this may be the struggle of present mankind" (244). This means that the suffering of the democracy was not the confrontation of capitalism and communism, but the suffering of a person put and required to select the position between both intervals. That is, "modern thought" can be read as the period when the boundary of capitalism and communism becomes vague and confusing.

It is significant that in the love triangle of the novel, Japanese men have

no space to occupy. In the case of "Ana – Odoriko Oruga Arurowa Jiken," a novel written in Japanese for Japanese readers, a Japanese narrator in the novel acts as an agency of the writer's, or more generally, a Japanese man's desire and anxiety towards a hybrid, modernized/Westernized woman in Harbin. As I have argued, the plot of the novel in which a Japanese man "occupies" and "conquers" a Russian woman, driving a Jewish, a Chinese, and a Russian man away from her, can be read as an allegory of Japanese colonial desire for Harbin. Yet in the case of *Anna Orlova*, things are much more complicated, for there are no Japanese men playing significant roles in the love triangle story.

You can regard these novels as the case of Japanese appropriation of the classical Orientalist stories. As with most forms of appropriation, it must depend on the basic formula of the original—"good, white, bourgeois man from the West" saves, loves, and is loved by "native" woman. In the case of "Ana – Odoriko Oruga Arurowa Jiken," a Japanese man takes the "white man's burden" and privilege upon his shoulders. In the case of *Anna Orlova*, however, the role of the reliever is given to John Harvard, a British, bourgeois man, following the classical Orientalist romance stories more faithfully. Japanese man cannot be, after all, an Occidental/masculine colonizer who is beloved by an Oriental/feminine colonized, as the novel seems to imply.

The hybrid nature of modernity represented by Anna Orlova and Harbin, and the author's identity as a Japanese, Westernized modernist, complicate the situation further. As a modernized/Westernized woman, she is, while being an embodiment of the "degenerate," terminal condition of capitalism, also the "barbarous" East. If she had been a "pure," "native" woman, uncontaminated by Western influences, love between her and John Harvard would have been a straightforward Orientalist romance between an Occidental/masculine colonizer and an Oriental/feminine colonized. As with Anna, the author, Gunji Jirōmasa, a Japanese modernist, is a monstrous hybrid of modernity/Westernization—he is, at least on the level of culture and tastes, "colonized" by Western modernity, and he knows all too well that he is not allowed a space to occupy in a romance plot between an Occidental/masculine colonizer and an Oriental/feminine colonized.

The story "Ana – Oruga Arurowa Jiken" is narrated by a Japanese for a Japanese readership that symbolizes the author's, and the entire Japanese male population's, desire for Western women. The story ends with the Japanese man getting ready to depart on a journey with the mixed Western/Eastern figure, Orga Arlova. However, at the end he verbalizes his doubts of his being

with her. The point that the victor imitating a Western viewpoint arrives at is the impossibility to imitate a tale of a Western victor. In *Anna Orlova* this impossibility can be seen in the relationship between the characters and the author. A *Modan* novelist, Gunji Jirōmasa, well understood what Orientalism was. So he realized how comical it would be to novelize a story for Western readership about a Japanese Oriental protagonist caught in a love triangle with a Russian. Accompanying the full-length novel at the end is also the short story, “The Paris of the Orient.” Here a Japanese character finally appears. However, this is more about the appearance of an Oriental character to guarantee Orientalism in the full-length novel—there is no expectation on the character to play the protagonist of a romance story.

Ⅵ. Conclusion

Within the current of *Shōwa Modan* cities like Harbin and Shanghai aroused the imagination of Japanese literature, and the Japanese modernist writers tried to create a new style with their own interpretation and translation of the cultural others. While the Japanese modernist writers absorbed the aesthetics and politics of Orientalism in terms of “modernization,” the frameworks, such as the West/non-West, the Occident/Orient, the savage/civilized, capitalism/communism, overlap and cross their borders, amplify and overlap the contradiction or the ambivalent identity of Japanese imperialism through the process of translating Western exoticisms into a Japanese context. From this viewpoint, it can be said that “modan” signifies the encounters of the East and West in the geographical and political sense, and modernist literature represents that struggle that took place on the cultural-political stage in East Asia. This is, I think, modernism in Japan, and could be modernism itself.

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Abstract

This article attempts to analyze modernism as exoticism in Japanese modernist writings around 1930, especially those concerning encounters in the East Asian cities of Shanghai and Harbin. While a Japanese writer absorbed the aesthetics and politics of Orientalism in terms of "modernization," the framework, such as the West/non-West, the Occident/Orient, the savage/civilized, capitalism/communism, cross their borders, amplify, and overlap the contradiction or the ambivalent identity of Japanese imperialism through the process of translating Western exoticisms into a Japanese context. From this viewpoint, it can be said that "modan" (モダン, modern) signifies the encounters of the East and West in the geographical and political sense, and the Japanese modernist literature represents that struggle that took place on the cultural-political stage in East Asia. This is modernism in Japan, and could be modernism itself.

Keywords: Japanese modernism, exoticism, Paris in the Orient, Shanghai, Harbin

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